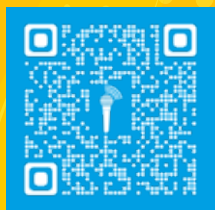


Information for children and young people

# COMING INTO CARE



[sandwellvoice.co.uk](http://sandwellvoice.co.uk)

# HELLO, HOW ARE YOU DOING?

We put this guide together to help you and others like you who have just come into care. It will tell you what it's like to be in care, what to expect and how to cope with the good and the bad.

We know you're feeling scared and you feel like you're the only one in the world that this has happened to. You probably feel really lonely and as if there's no one who understands or who you can talk to.

But don't worry, you're not alone, there are lots of people who are in your shoes. We understand why you might be feeling scared. There are people who will help you and who will listen.

We've tried to cover everything in this guide that we thought you would want to know. We hope it helps.

If there is anything not included in the booklet, please speak to your carer or social worker or log on to [www.sandwellvoice.co.uk](http://www.sandwellvoice.co.uk)

We are here to listen to you.

# WHY AM I HERE?

There are many young people in care, just like you! It's important to remember that it's **NOT YOUR FAULT.**

You're probably asking why this has happened to you and when you can go home.

There are lots of reason why you might be in care. Often it's because your family are not able to care for you at the moment or that things are difficult at home. Your social worker will be able to tell you more.

While you are in care the person looking after you will be able to make sure you are safe and looked after.

Your social worker will look at what's happening at home and try to help make things better so you can return home as quickly as possible. Sometimes this may happen quite fast, while for others it may take longer.

**Some young people will stay in care until they are old enough to live on their own.**

You will find out what is planned for you during your looked after review. If you have any questions, ask your social worker - they are there to help you.

If you feel worried and need to talk you can always speak to your social worker or the Participation Team, have a look at page 16 for contact details.

**There are lots of other young people in care that you can talk to and who can be your friend - they are going through the same thing as you.**

# TIME WITH MY FAMILY

Everyone knows that it is really important for you to see your family.

If it is safe for you to meet with family members, a social worker will arrange regular times to see them.

These may take place in a family centre, a community centre or sometimes at home. This is called 'Family time'.

There will sometimes be someone supervising who will be present during family time.

Family time will only happen if it's safe for you and it's something that you want to happen.



# DIFFERENT TYPES OF CARE

## Foster Care

Foster care is a place where you live as a family, when you can't be with your own family. Your foster carer will support you with your day-to-day needs while social work staff make decisions about where you can live in the future.

Let's explain...



## Family & Friends

People who have offered to look after you while your parents can't.



## Residential Home

You live here with other children, and staff who will care for you.



## Respite Care

This is a stay in a foster home or a children's residential home for a planned amount of time only, and is to give you or your parents/carer support and a break if needed.



## Pathway Planning

When you are coming up to 16 years old, your social worker will help you to plan for your future after you leave care at 18. This includes thinking about where you will live, how to manage your money and what other help and support you will receive.

# WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN

When you are living with a different family, your social worker will try to keep you in the same school as they know it is important for you to keep in contact with your teachers and friends.

Sometimes, however, this is not possible and you may have to move to a different school because:

- You are now living too far from your old school.
- You may be in danger if you attend your old school.

If you have been moved from your old school and you don't understand why, ask your social worker and they will explain it to you.

If you are unhappy about how your school has been changed you can make a complaint. See the section called 'Things aren't right - what can I do?' for help with making a complaint.

## PEP

A PEP is a Personal Education Plan. This keeps a record of how you are getting on in school and helps you and your teacher set targets. This is to make sure you get a good education and all your needs at school are met.

We think it is really helpful to set these targets as your education is very important.

# WITH SCHOOL



## Why have a PEP?

Having a PEP means that teachers and social workers can help you deal with the changes that are happening around you while you are in care. Education is really important and we are all here to help you achieve your potential.

Wherever we can, we will try to keep you at the same school. We don't want you to have too many changes all at the same time. But if this isn't best for you, or your placement is outside Sandwell, you may have to move school.

At school, you will have a designated teacher who is there to help with your education and will attend your Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting. You will have a PEP meeting every six months. This is to look at how you are doing and see if any other support needs to be put in place. You have the right to attend these meetings with your social worker and foster carer.

In Sandwell, we also have a Virtual School for children in care. This works closely with schools to make sure you have a good education.



# WHO ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE?

You will probably come into contact with the following people:

## Social Worker

Social Workers are members of staff employed by Sandwell Children's Trust who will visit you every 4 to 6 weeks and make sure that you are OK and doing well, they also think about what your long-term plan might look like and discuss what your future.

A Care Plan will be made for you by social workers, this is to make sure you are looked after well. It includes things like doctors' appointments, placement rules and education plans. It means that everyone knows what they are supposed to do to make sure you are safe and happy. You should have a say in your care plan.

Social workers have your best interests at heart and need to make sure you are kept safe and are provided with the best possible care. They can also help you with any problems you may have. Write down your social worker's name and number or call 0121 569 3100.

Social workers are there to support you.

## Supervising Social Worker

Your Supervising Social Worker will visit your foster carer regularly to make sure they have the help they need to look after you well.

## Independent Reviewing Officer

You will see the Independent Reviewing Officer, at your review. They will chair your review and give an independent viewpoint. They check that you are happy with your care plan and check it is working with you, your social worker and other people in your life. They oversee your care plan, making sure your needs are being met.

They chair meetings that everyone who is involved in your care plan should attend. They make sure that your school, family time and health are as good as they can be.

You can attend your reviews as this gives you the chance to let everyone know how things are for you and you are able to ask if you need anything to change. If you feel you can and with the support of your social worker, you can chair your own reviews. You can also ask your social worker if you want anyone to attend your review.

## LACE Worker

LACE workers work for the Looked After Children Education Service.

They will meet you to make sure that your education is going well and to plan targets for you in school.

## Dedicated Nurse

When you first come into care you will have a health assessment. The nurse will see you every 12 months to make sure you are in good health.

This can be more often if you need help and advice.

## Carer

They look after you on a day to day basis and will ensure that your voice is heard during important meetings.

# ALL ABOUT WHERE I'LL BE LIVING



## Use of the Telephone/Mobile Phone/Tablet/ Computer

You can use what has been agreed with your carers and your social worker. We need to make sure that everyone stays safe as we know how activities online can sometimes be tricky to manage on your own.

## School equipment

If you are at school your carer will buy all the things you need, like books, pens and pencils. Your carer will make sure you have a school uniform and PE kit.

## Clothes and presents and special occasions

Your carer will make sure that you have enough clothes - there is a clothing allowance that they can use for this. They also have an allowance to buy you presents for your birthday and other special occasions, depending on your culture or what festivals you celebrate.

## Activities

Your carer will pay for you to do activities like dance classes and football. If you were doing these before, they will help you to keep them up. They will also encourage you to try out some new things in the area.

## School trips and travel

Your carer can sign forms for you to go on trips with the school, if it is for a day. Your carer should support you to travel to and from school and if it's too far or they are looking after other children, then your social worker will look at other ways to get you to school.

## Your own room

You should have your own room, or you may be able to share with someone if you are related to them and they are the same sex.

## Meals

Your carer should meet your dietary and religious needs when cooking your meals and ask you what kind of food you enjoy.

# MY HEALTH

Being healthy and understanding your own health and development is important for all young people.

Being healthy covers things like what you eat, what exercise you do and being confident and happy.

It is also important that you know when and how to seek help or advice from professionals if you are feeling unwell or worried about your health.

Everyone has a unique body and all young people will have questions at some time or another about their aches and pains, whether things are working properly or not or if their bits and pieces are 'normal'!

It is also natural that as you become a teenager you will have questions around your development, sexuality and sexual health.

**While you are living with your carer it is important to remember that there are people available to help you and answer any questions that you may have.**

## Why is there special help for children and young people in care?

When you move around or have problems at home it is sometimes difficult to keep track of all your health visits and you may miss some health talks at school.

When you live away from your birth family it can be lonely and sometimes you can feel that there is no one to talk to.

You must remember that you are not alone - there are people who are able to help and who will answer your questions on all health issues, including sexual health, contraception and pregnancy matters.

**They will do this by treating you with respect and not embarrassing you.**



# WHO CAN I ASK?

The first person you should speak to is your carer or key worker.

If your question is on a sexual matter and you feel that it's not possible to speak to your carer or key worker, you can get help and advice from Healthy Sandwell's Sexual Health team. They offer a range of sexual health services to help you stay in control of your body and keep you feeling well, both at clinics across the borough or direct to you at home.

**[www.healthysandwell.co.uk/our-services/sexual-health](http://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/our-services/sexual-health)  
or call 0121 612 2323**

You can also get help & advice through the family planning clinics at any time.

To contact sexual health services direct please use one of the following methods:

**Telephone: 0121612 2323 or 07860 018932 and  
email [swbh.ishus@nhs.net](mailto:swbh.ishus@nhs.net)**

Online STI testing kits can be ordered from:  
**[www.sh.uk](http://www.sh.uk)**

For any assistance in contacting the  
service please visit:  
**[www.healthysandwell.co.uk/our-services/sexual-health](http://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/our-services/sexual-health)**

## Is information shared with my carer or other people?

Unless you are in danger of hurting yourself or possibly hurting other people, your questions will be treated in a confidential manner.

Before sharing information with other people, the Looked After Children's Nurse or other professionals will ask your permission. They will at all times treat you professionally and sensitively. They will not judge you and they will give you the information you need in a respectful manner. Please do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask these people whatever questions you have.

**They are there to help you. Remember, health education and sexual health education is a necessary part of growing up.**

**CONFIDENTIAL**



A safe and easy way for  
children and young people to  
tell us how they are feeling

**YOUR VOICE**  
WE'RE HERE TO HEAR!

Sandwell **VOICE**.co.uk



Sandwell **VOICE**.co.uk

The new website for all children and young people  
we work with at Sandwell Children's Trust

Try the code to  
open the website



email: [participation\\_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:participation_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) for more info



# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

**GET INVOLVED!**

If you are a child in care or  
a care leaver and want to meet  
other people and have some  
fun... get in touch!

**VOICE SANDWELL**

**INVEST INFORM INVOLVE**

Are you a young person in the care of Sandwell Children's Trust?

Are you 11-17yrs old and want to make a difference?

Got something to say?

Your voice matters!

**GET INVOLVED!**

**KEY FACTS**

- As a group WE:
- Listen to what young people have to say about being in the care of Sandwell Children's Trust
- Tell decision makers at Sandwell Children's Trust about what works or doesn't work in our lives
- Involve young people in events, groups and meetings to improve services in the future
- Provide young people with the chance to have their voices heard by different professionals
- Get involved in lots of exciting projects
- Learn new skills
- Have the opportunity to make a difference and change how services are run for the better
- Raise our concerns at Corporate Parenting Board
- Have a lot of fun too!

**GET INVOLVED IN VOICES OF SANDWELL TODAY**

SPEAK TO YOUR SOCIAL WORKER OR EMAIL  
[PARTICIPATION\\_TEAM@SANDWELLCHILDRENSTRUST.ORG](mailto:PARTICIPATION_TEAM@SANDWELLCHILDRENSTRUST.ORG)

**Sandwell Children's Trust**

**Say!**

[www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/voices](http://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/voices)



# THINGS AREN'T RIGHT – WHAT CAN I DO?

Sometimes people and places can make you sad or angry.

When you're in care these feelings can sometimes be too much to handle on your own and it's important to remember that you do have people to talk to and who will help you.

## The Childrens Society Black Country Advocacy Service

What is an advocate?

An advocate is a person who can help you say if you don't like something or if you don't agree with a decision that affects your life. Advocates are independent and confidential – they don't work for Sandwell Children's Trust and they will not tell anyone what you say to them without your agreement (unless there is something that might cause harm to you or someone else).

An advocate can:

- Help you sort out a problem or worry.

- Listen to you and help you understand your rights.
- Help make sure you are treated fairly.
- Help you say what you think about things.
- Help make sure other people are listening to what you have to say.
- Help you sort out a problem the way you want it sorted.

You can contact them:

Email:

BCA.referral@childrenssociety.org.uk

Tel: 0808 169 9954

Go to <https://forms.office.com/r/Ts4KV9T2qD> for the BCA referral form.

If you need talk to someone in an emergency you can call:

## Sandwell Children's Trust

Wellman Building Dudley Road  
Oldbury. B69 3DL.

Telephone number **0121 569 3100**

Leaving Care Team **0121 569 2201**

Participation Team **0121 569 5922**

**0121 569 7220** (Daytime)

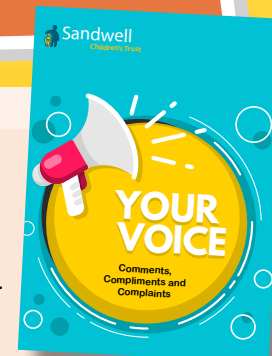
**0121 569 3100**  
(Evening and weekends)

**NHS 111**

**Emergencies Services 999**

The  
Children's  
Society

# FEEDBACK COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS



Sandwell Children's Trust is committed to putting children and young people first. We are always working hard to improve the services we provide. You may want to make a comment, compliment or complaint. Your voice matters to us and the 'Our Voice' leaflet tells you how to do this.

It is your right to be treated fairly, respectfully and with dignity when making a complaint, regardless of your racial identity, sexuality, disability, age, culture, religion, gender or status.

We will always treat you fairly.

## Comments, Compliments and Complaints

It is important for us to know about things that are going well or how the service can be improved.

We are pleased when someone takes the time to contact us with feedback on our services.

If you are unhappy with a service you have received from us please let us know so that we can put things right. If you are happy or pleased with a service you have received it would be great to hear about this.

**Your views help us to understand what is important to you so we can learn from these.**

Please ask your carer or Social Worker for a Your Voice form or you can download it from [www.sandwellvoice.co.uk](http://www.sandwellvoice.co.uk)



# Our PROMISE to **YOU** (Pledge)

## We will:

- Keep you Safe ✓
- Support you with education ✓
- Support your health ✓
- Help you prepare for adult life ✓
- Help your voice to be heard ✓

For a copy of your pledge...  
please contact the participation team by calling 0121 569 5922  
or email [participation\\_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:participation_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org)  
or message Sandy Wells on facebook



Sandwell  
Children's Trust

## Participation Team



Congratulations to our newest Hear by Right  
Flagship Award achieving organisations!

The Participation Team works with children and young people to help them express their views. It is important that children and young people have a say in how things can get better for them, and also how things can improve at Sandwell Children's Trust

### What we offer young People:

- Discuss topics important to you
- Rewards & Recognition
- Fun activities
- Making new friends
- Learning new skills
- Involved in the recruitment of staff and inductions
- Improving services for young People



### GROUPS WE WORK WITH

Forum for Independent  
Young Adults

Voices of Sandwell

Individuals & Other groups



Foster for



**Sandwell**

Children's Trust



**[sandwellvoice.co.uk](http://sandwellvoice.co.uk)**



**Ofsted**  
Good  
Provider